

Living in the Past

Historical perspective



Young expert

Kathleen Parkin was born September 1900 in California, and became interested in the relatively new communication method of wireless telegraphy at age 5. At age 9, after having obtained her amateur radio license with call sign 6GK, she operated one of the first amateur wireless stations in California, at her Sam Rafael home with her brother John (who was no less a radio prodigy himself) for six years.

In 1916, while a fifteen-year-old high school student, on a whim, Kathleen applied for and obtained a first-class commercial / professional radio operator's license from the US government with the call sign 6SO after passing the exam with a high score. She was the youngest female radio operator licensed up to that time, and the third female ever. With that license, she was entitled to operate any grade of wireless station, and qualify for any wireless operator position at the time.

Kathleen designed and built all of her own station equipment, including a 250-watt spark-gap transmitter. She was featured on the cover of the October 1916 issue of *Electrical Experimenter*. From the inside article on her and other

notable women telegraphers, Kathleen stated, *I think wireless telegraphy is a most fascinating study, and one which could very easily be taken up by girls, as it is a great deal more interesting than the telephone.... It seems to me that every one should at least know the code, as cases might easily arise of a ship in distress...and a knowledge of the code might be the means of saving the ship and the lives of the passengers.*

Later, Kathleen, her brother John and two other brothers started a business making wireless equipment, the Parkin Manufacturing Company, out of San Rafael, California. She was highly involved in the family business, and was held in high esteem by fellow amateurs for decades, clear up until her passing in 1990. You can read more about Kathleen Parkin (also called *the ultimate geek girl of ham radio*) in *Rosie Riveters*, and the *Marin County Free Library*, and *On All Bands*, and *One Tube Radio*.



Allow Us to Present Miss Kathleen Parkin, Expert Radio Operator at Fifteen Years of Age. She Has Made Her Own Apparatus.

Kathleen at a 250-watt spark-gap station that she designed and built herself